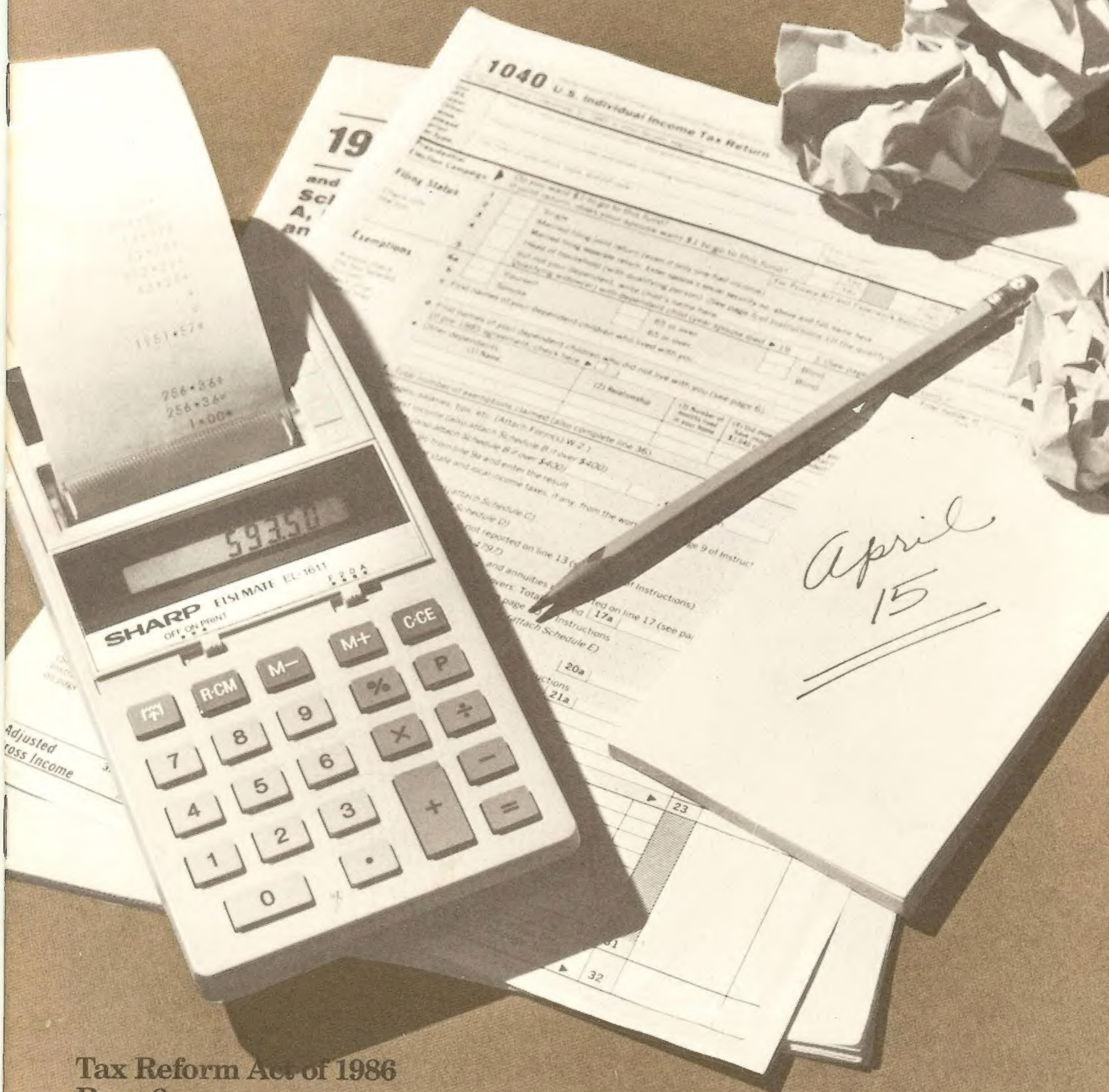


# PLAIN TALKS

January 1987





# CONTENTS

Volume 66

Number 1

Checking lines from the air	4
...And from the ground	5
Working together for GSU	6
Tax Reform Act of 1986	8
Inside GSU	12
Retiree update	13
They've got the points	14
Space adventure	15

## PLAIN TALKS

January 1987

Published for employees and retirees of Gulf States Utilities Company. No portion of the contents of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. Address all communications to PLAIN TALKS, Gulf States Utilities Company, P. O. Box 2951, Beaumont, Texas 77704, Phone (409) 838-6631.

**Executive Editor:**  
Betty Gavora

**Editor:**  
Susan Huff Gilley

**Correspondents:**  
Robert Adams  
Vickie Albert  
Ronnie Bordelon  
Barbara Broussard  
Mamie Burrell  
Debra Casse  
Myra Castello  
Laurie Cobbs  
Cheryl Crawford  
Lisa Creekbaum  
Betty Dickschat  
Betty Dowell  
Andy Dreher  
Bonnie Duval  
Ella B. Fairley  
Donna Fancher  
Charlotte Gautreau  
Rhonda Haskins  
Connie Herford  
Tina Hunt  
Les Jones  
Lynda Kapalski  
Helen Kennedy  
Clint Lilley  
Audrey McDonald  
Clint Moss  
Sherry Overbeck  
Debra Patin  
Edith Patterson  
Carol Payne  
Myra Ponthier  
Casey Richert  
Mike Rodgers  
Greg Russell  
D.W. Rutherford  
Jeral Semien  
Sue Simon  
Monica Thomas  
David Thornhill  
Jean Tinsley  
Delores West  
Robby Zeringue

Employees who change residences or offices should fill out company mailing-address-change forms (GSU0012-00-81) and return them to the mailroom in the Edison Plaza. GSU publications, departmental mailings and other company information are not automatically forwarded; addresses must be corrected when employees move.



## School work

Carol Morris  
Gulf States Utilities  
Beaumont, Texas

Dear Ms. Morris:

Vincent Middle School would like to commend Mr. Ted Johnson for his outstanding contributions to the School Volunteer Program.

The time and effort that Mr. Johnson spent working with the students was appreciated. The students looked forward to his weekly visit and to the help he gave them.

We are grateful for Mr. Johnson's enthusiasm in learning our computer and programs so that he could help the students. Mr. Johnson was able to relate well with the students. He had the needed empathy and a great rapport with them.

The teachers of Vincent Middle School applaud Gulf States' and Mr. Johnson's interest in education. The active participation of business and community play an important part in the development of our most valuable resource, our children.

Sincerely,  
Fay Clark, Teacher  
James L. Breaux, Principal  
Vincent Middle School

**Editor's note:** Johnson is supervisor-project systems in Beaumont. Morris, formerly of Beaumont Division, is now a consumer information coordinator in Conroe.

## Cat rescuers

Ted Meinscher  
Gulf States Utilities  
Lake Charles, La.

Dear Sir:

I would like to express my appreciation to Gulf States Utilities Co. and employees Greg Devall and Scott White for the public service performed for me on Friday, Aug. 15, 1986.

On the afternoon of Aug. 15, I requested that a cherry-picker truck come by my home to remove my kitten from a power pole. There is a transformer located on the pole and the cat was in a state of panic after having been there since before daylight and climbing around on the transformer. After explaining the situation to your dispatcher, he agreed about the possibility of the cat causing a service interruption afterhours (not to mention what might happen to the cat) and if it was possible, he would ask a truck to stop by on the way in to see if they could solve the problem. Within 10 minutes, the problem was solved.

Having retired from a utility company, I realize that to perform this service was an expense for Gulf States and I would be happy to pay for a service call, if you care to bill me.

Please express my appreciation to the employees involved — all were most professional, kind and understanding. You are fortunate to have them as your employees.

Again, thanks to all of you.

Very truly yours,  
Esther Gallardo

**Editor's note:** Devall is a serviceman-2nd class and White is a lineman-4th class. Both work in Lake Charles.

## Super service

Gulf States Utilities  
Lafayette, La.

To all employees of Gulf States:

I would like to thank you for the fine service we received last Wednesday (Nov. 5). During the bad weather, we got quite a bit of lightning, which finally managed to knock out the electricity. We called you and someone came in the rain, late at night, and worked until our power was restored.

I have a child who has croup and asthma, so you can imagine

how important it is that she doesn't get too hot.

Thanks again! It takes very special people to work in such weather conditions and I know you are very much appreciated around our neighborhood!

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Rueben Broussard  
Erath, La.

**Editor's note:** Cornell Sonnier, district serviceman-1st class in Abbeville, responded to this call.

## Health help

Sam Richardson  
Gulf States Utilities  
Lake Charles, La.

Dear Mr. Richardson:

Thank you so much for speaking to the Homemaker/Home Health Aides class. Your talk helps to reinforce our classroom lectures.

Your generous donation of time was much appreciated. The Homemaker/Home Health Aides have benefitted from your participation in our class.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,  
Lynthia Piccione  
H/HHA Coordinator

**Editor's note:** Richardson is a consumer information coordinator in Lake Charles.

## THE COVER

**E**mployee benefit plans have been significantly affected by enactment of the Tax Reform Act of 1986.

Mike Sealy, director-employee benefits, explores some of those effects in the story beginning on page 8.



# Checking lines from the air

by Mike Rodgers

The airplane flies low in the sky over a GSU right-of-way, the pilot holding to a steady course on a line with the transmission towers. In the seat next to the pilot, an observer spots a tree with limbs growing near a tower, notes the structure number and reads it into a tape recorder for use later. "That's the type of preventive maintenance we do," says Tom Hargrove, pilot.

GSU's many miles of rights-of-way often run through rough forest country or remote, steamy swamps. Aerial patrols are faster, more complete and cheaper than ground inspections, factors which combine to save our customers money. "We can see things from the air that would be missed in a ground search," emphasizes Hargrove, "even large woodpecker holes in wooden structures." Lines in both Texas and Louisiana are flown three times a year in a search for potential problems. Inspections are carried out in two-person teams, with the pilot and the observer, who is also a pilot, switching back and forth every half hour or so to keep fresh.

Hargrove says that once a pilot has seen a few thousand undamaged towers, it isn't hard to spot trouble. Among the most common problems are insulators which have been shot up, broken static wires which may be struck by cropdusters, soil erosion, tree growth in the right-of-way, rotting crossarms on wooden poles or deer stands erected on structures.

The patrol plane flies at about 100 knots, but can go even slower if necessary to do a very careful inspection. GSU has a waiver from the Federal Aviation Administration to do the low-level treetop flying required in work such as this. Every fifth transmission tower has a reference number, making it easier to pinpoint the location of damage. Once an inspection is complete, a report is filed and repairs are made.

In spite of the efficiency of air patrols, Hargrove points out that sometimes a problem can be strictly a judgment call. "Willow and tallow trees grow faster than pine trees," he says. "Their long branches may not be a threat now, but by the next inspection they could cause an outage." Line sag is something else which receives close attention. Sag is necessary as a stress buffer between poles.

In the summer, however, lines sag even more because of heavy demand. Pilots must ascertain that a line does not have so much sag that it drops into a tree.

Hargrove is one of five pilots working for GSU. In addition to their regular responsibilities, they are occasionally called out on special patrols when the location of an outage must be pinpointed as quickly as possible. "This can be very helpful should one of our large industrial customers lose power," says Floyd Crow, chief pilot. "It's in everyone's interest to get them back on quickly."

Most pilots have a favorite story about their careers, and Hargrove is no exception. "Once we were flying a line in Western Division between Splendora and New Caney. It so happened that a lady owned a dairy goat farm alongside our right-of-way. Coincidentally, we always managed to fly our patrol during milking time. One day she called up and gave us a real chewing-out. Company personnel who went out to her farm for a visit got chapter and verse on the difficulties of dairy farming and trying to get milk from frightened goats. That section of right-of-way is inspected from the ground these days."



(left) Before takeoff, Hargrove scans the schedule of lines he is to patrol. (above) Checking the level of engine oil is very important.



# ...And from the ground

by Mike Rodgers

What happens to a 27-year veteran of Gulf States when she accepts the challenge of a new job within the company? "I just love it," says Jo Ann Burnett, "I'm an outdoors person and one who loves meeting customers, so this job hits the spot." In September, after 15 years as an executive secretary, she became inspector-tree trimming for Lake Charles Division.

Burnett started with the company as a departmental clerk in 1959 and then became a stenographer. She enjoyed her years as executive secretary in the center of division activity, but admitted to some restlessness from time to time, a feeling she attributes to her background. Born in the country, she still lives on the same farm where she was reared and is used to being very active. She raises 45 head

of cattle and likes to go "bush hogging" on her tractor — clearing out undergrowth from the property.

These days, Burnett is busy assigning contract crews to trim trees and dealing with the occasional angry customer who insists that a tree be left untouched.

"We often have to explain that trimming helps keep the branches out of lines and reduces the chances of an outage. Sometimes we point out that children climb trees and that without adequate clearance between the tree and the line, they could be seriously hurt. People are often very sensitive about their trees, so we must think of every good reason we can to justify trimming."

Burnett enjoys the opportunity to make an irate customer happy. That attitude, says Dudley Clarke, general line supervisor, is a reflection of her outlook on life. He uses words such as "dedica-

tion," "honesty," and "love for her fellow man" in describing her enthusiasm for work. "She has always been a good employee," he says.

Looking back, Burnett recalls that she nearly fainted when the job was offered, since it came as a complete surprise. She was also concerned that the crews might not respect her, fears that proved groundless. "The relationship has been excellent," she notes with satisfaction.

Burnett receives the damage reports from the GSU pilots who inspect the transmission lines and rights-of-way. It is her responsibility to see that, if tree trimming is required, the job gets done. Discussing this aspect of her job reveals yet another ambition, one she is determined to fulfill. "I'd like to fly a patrol with the pilots to learn the lines better," she says with a smile.



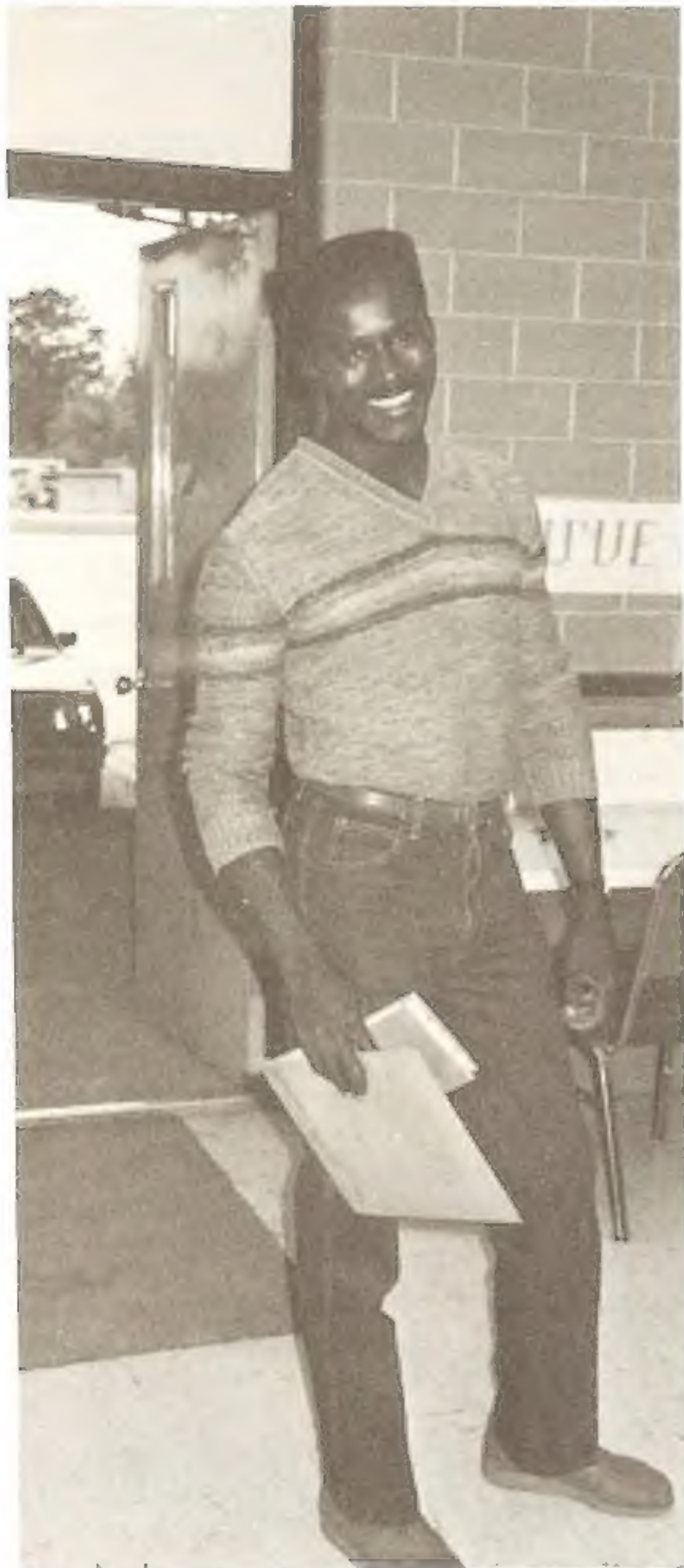
*Jo Ann Burnett discusses a tree trimming project with Russell Istre of Blume Tree Services.*



# Working together for Gulf States

Gulf States is made up of a variety of jobs, personalities and locations, but every employee has one thing in common — a desire to make Gulf States the best it can be.

*Plain Talks* correspondents captured several on-the-job scenes on film.



*Jason St. Julien, meterman-1st class, Orange*



*Dwight Anderson, building and grounds maintenance man, Port Arthur*



*Ann Matheny, senior district service representative, Zachary*





*Ed Matsoukas (seated) and Victor Enmon, both marketing agents from Port Arthur*



*Ronnie Webb (standing), repairman-1st class, and John Joseph, equipment operator, both of Sabine Station*



# PLAIN TALKS

## Tax Reform Act of 1986

Sealy sums up tax bill — Some things you'll need to know

Beginning in 1987, Americans will live with the effects of the landmark Tax Reform Act of 1986. Not since 1954 has there been such a complete restructuring of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), which governs federal income taxation.

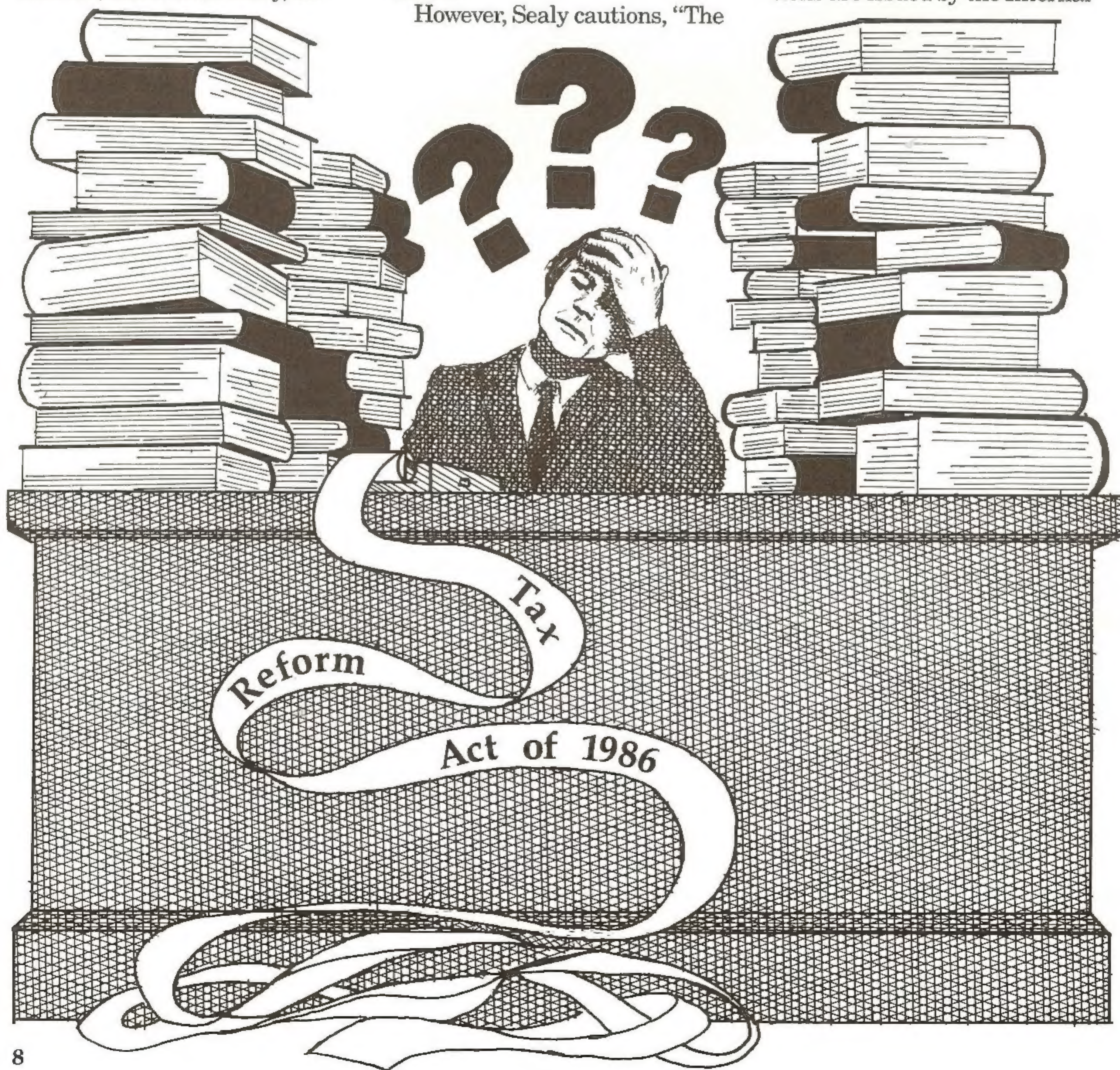
Many of the tax law changes will significantly affect employees, both as individuals and as GSUers, notes Mike Sealy, director-

ector-employee benefits. The effects will vary, but one bright overall effect will be the development of lower income tax brackets.

This report explains how some provisions of the Tax Reform Act will apply to GSU's Thrift Plan, Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), Payroll Stock Ownership Plan (PAYSOP), Retirement Plan and Financial Aid to Education.

However, Sealy cautions, "The

Tax Reform Act of 1986 is extremely complex and — because of its newness — leaves many unanswered questions." The following information describes present interpretation of some of the changes affecting GSU employee benefit plans, and could change as further explanations, revenue rulings, regulations and technical corrections are issued by the Internal



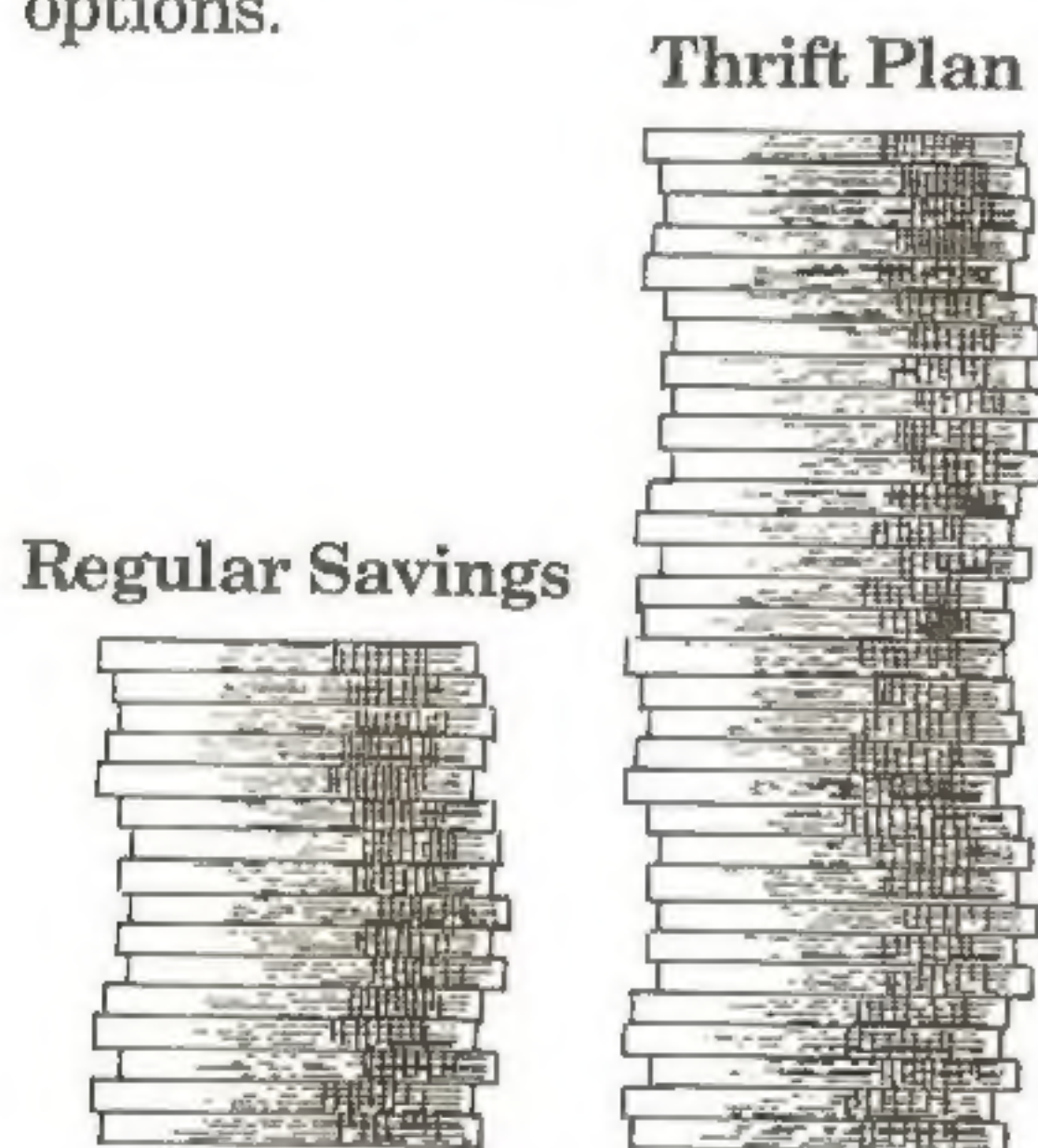


Revenue Service (IRS) and other regulatory agencies.

Sealy feels that it would be premature to try to fully describe the impact of the new tax bill on GSU, but says he feels two points are clear:

- The GSU Thrift Plan — including the 401(k) option — will continue to be an attractive savings vehicle for retirement.
- Employees should assess their Thrift Plan participation in light of this new law and make changes if necessary to ensure that their personal long-term savings objectives will be met.

Sealy explains the continuing attractiveness of the Thrift Plan by comparing an investment outside the plan with one made to the Basic Thrift or Basic 401(k) options.



He asked, "What other savings plan offers an immediate return on your investment of 50 percent?" The company's 50 cent match of each \$1 the employee contributes to Basic Thrift or Basic 401(k) is vested in the employee's account. So, the first 6 percent of an employee's contribution to the plan provides an immediate 50 percent return to the employee — 50 percent greater than the same investment made outside the plan in comparable investments (stock, savings, etc.).

He said that \$100 invested each month for 10 years in an outside investment — assuming an 8-percent rate of return — would grow to \$18,293.79. If the

same \$100 per month was invested in Basic or 401(k) Thrift, it would generate company-matching contributions and, assuming the same 8 percent rate of return, it would grow to \$27,440.68. This comparison does not take into account how taxes on the total in each example may be affected by the Tax Reform Act. The illustration **does** show that it is important for each employee to become familiar with the new law in order to minimize the taxes on such investments.

### **In-service withdrawals from Basic and Additional Thrift Plan**

Until now, employees could make in-service withdrawals of their Basic and Additional (after-tax) Thrift Plan contributions at any time, subject to the withdrawal and suspension rules of the plan. Taxation of earnings on employee contributions are deferred until the total account balance is distributed due to retirement, death or termination.

But, effective Jan. 1, 1987, the IRS will consider withdrawals based on post-1986 employee after-tax contributions to Basic and/or Additional Thrift part employee contributions (which are not subject to tax) and part earnings (which will be taxed as follows).

Earnings will be immediately subject to income tax at ordinary income rates for the year in which each withdrawal is made. In addition, a 10 percent excise tax penalty may be applied to the taxable earnings portion of the withdrawal. Although the earnings are subject to immediate taxation, they will not be distributed in the withdrawal.

Employees' after-tax contributions made before Jan. 1, 1987, are not subject to the new tax and withdrawals will first be applied to these non-taxable, pre-1987 after-tax contributions until they are used up.

### **Employee Before-Tax Contributions to Basic 401(k) and Additional 401(k) Thrift Plan**

Up until Dec. 31, 1986, the overall maximum monthly employee contributions to the Thrift Plan, including Basic 401(k) and Additional 401(k) were limited to 16 percent of base salary. Employee contributions to Basic 401(k) and Additional 401(k) were further limited to \$30,000 yearly, or 25 percent of salary. Early withdrawals — that is, those made before death, retirement or termination of employment — were permitted only upon occurrence of "financial hardship." The highest-paid employees were subject to further restrictions.

Under the new law, which became effective Jan. 1, 1987, the overall maximum employee contribution limit to the Thrift Plan is still 16 percent of base monthly salary. However, the annual employee contribution limit to the Basic 401(k) and Additional 401(k) is reduced to \$7,000 per year and is subject to further reduction by employee contributions made to a tax-deferred plan of another employer. Considering GSU base salary only, those employees whose annual earnings exceed \$43,750 could be affected by the new limits. The \$7,000 will be indexed for inflation to the Consumer Price Index, beginning in 1988.

In addition, new non-discrimination rules may further restrict participation of some higher-paid employees.

So-called hardship withdrawal of employee contributions for financial hardship will still be allowed under Basic 401(k) and Additional 401(k) Thrift Plan. However, these withdrawals will generally be subject to a 10 percent excise tax. Earnings on employee contributions remain ineligible for hardship distribution.



## Taxation of Lump Sum Distributions

Before Jan. 1, 1987, total plan benefits from Thrift Plan, ESOP and PAYSOP were distributed only upon death, retirement or termination of employment. These funds were generally eligible for favorable tax treatment utilizing the 10-year forward averaging and/or capital gains method. Distributions could also be rolled over into Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs).

Taxation of these funds has now changed with enactment of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Distributions of total plan benefits still occur as previously described. However, the 10-year forward averaging method is repealed and replaced with a five-year forward averaging method, and capital gains treatment of pre-1974 contributions is phased out over a six-year period beginning in 1987 and ending in 1992.

The five-year averaging can be used only one time after age 59½. In addition, the taxable portion of certain early lump sum distributions will be subject to a 10 percent excise tax (see below). Generally, distributions may still be rolled over tax-deferred into an IRA.

However, the new law allows individuals who were at least age 50 by Jan. 1, 1986, to elect to have their distributions taxed under the old law. These "grandfathered" individuals are permitted a one-time opportunity to elect lump-sum treatment before or after age 59½ for a single distribution using either 10-year forward averaging under old 1986 tax rates or five-year forward averaging under new tax rates. The portion of the lump sum distribution attributable to pre-1974 contributions and eligible for long-term capital gains treatment is also retained for individuals who were age 50 by Jan. 1, 1986.

## New 10 Percent Early Distributions Tax

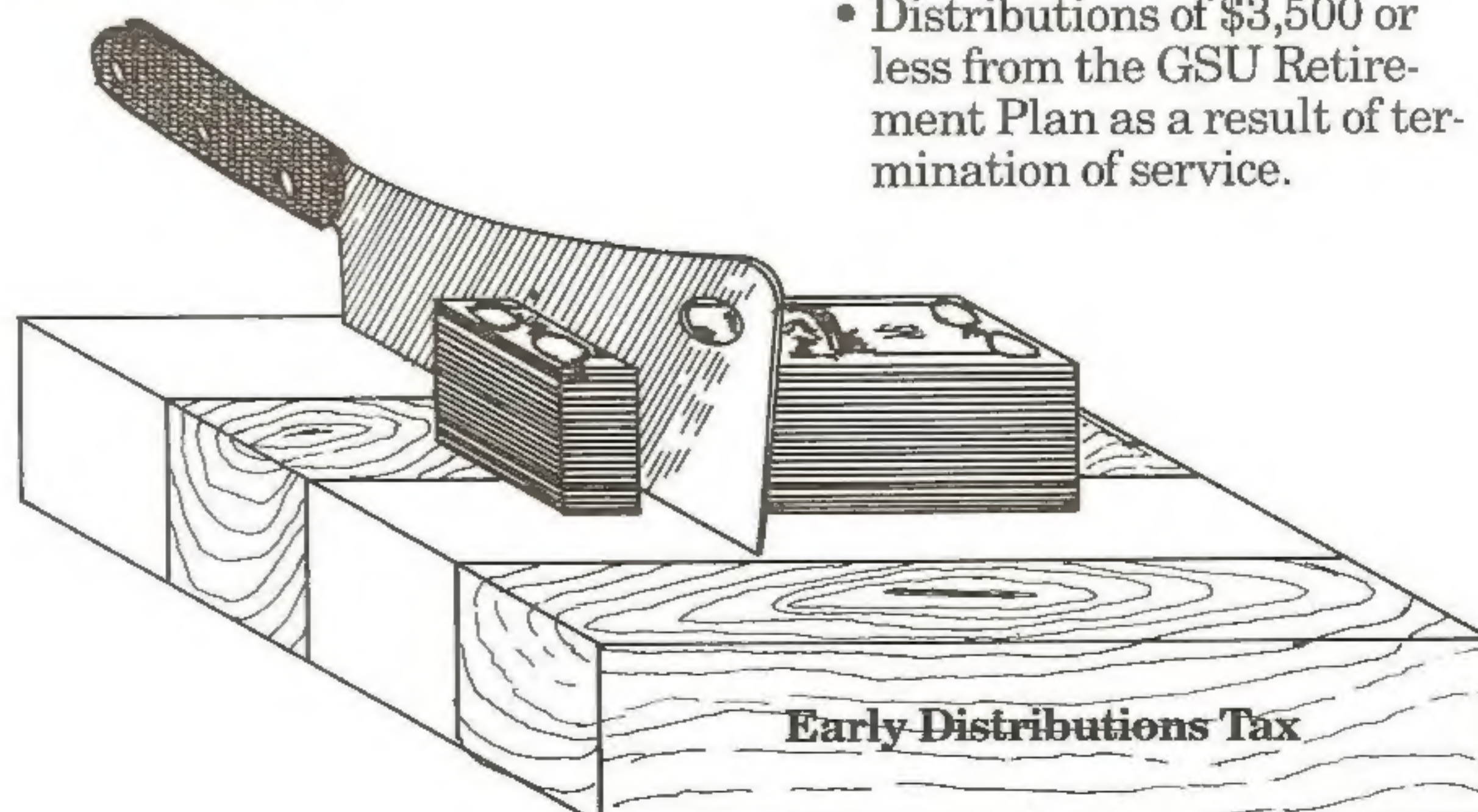
This provision applies to Thrift Plan, ESOP, PAYSOP and Retirement Plan (GSU's IRS-qualified plans) distributions.

Prior to Jan. 1, 1987, individuals who terminated employment after five years of plan participation and received their total lump sum plan distributions were permitted favorable tax treatment.

As has already been mentioned, now 10-year forward averaging has been repealed and replaced with five-year forward averaging and capital gains treatment is being phased out. In addition, a new 10 percent excise tax penalty has been imposed on certain early lump sum distributions from any of GSU's four qualified benefit plans. The new tax generally applies to distributions that are included in income in taxable years, beginning after Dec. 31, 1986. This means that all distributions made up of company contributions and earnings on employee and company contributions are subject to the new penalty, even though these contributions and earnings may have been made before Jan. 1, 1987.

Distributions from the Thrift Plan, ESOP, PAYSOP and Retirement which are **not** subject to the new 10 percent excise tax penalty are:

- The non-taxable portion of the distribution representing employee after-tax contributions.
- Distributions made before March 15, 1987, on account of separation from service in 1986, if the individual elects to have the lump sum distribution taxed on their 1986 tax return.
- Distributions made on or after the employee dies, becomes disabled or reaches age 59½.
- Distributions to employees who have reached age 55, terminated employment and satisfied the Retirement Plan's early retirement provisions.
- Amounts distributed from cash or deferred arrangements, such as 401(k) Thrift Plan, due to excess deferrals over the \$7,000 contribution limit or failure to meet the new non-discrimination rules.
- Distributions made from ESOP prior to Jan. 1, 1990.
- Distributions to alternate payees under a qualified domestic relations order (generally a spouse in the event of a divorce.)
- Distributions used to pay medical expenses to the extent the expenses qualify for the IRS medical expense deduction.
- Distributions rolled over into an IRA or other qualified benefit plan.
- Distributions of \$3,500 or less from the GSU Retirement Plan as a result of termination of service.





## Retirement Plan Changes

Retirees whose retirement began on or after Aug. 1, 1986, will feel considerable impact from one change resulting from the tax law. Effective retroactively, these retirees must immediately begin paying taxes on their pension payments.

Before, retiring employees were permitted to first receive non-taxable pension benefits attributable to their contributions before receiving taxable benefits from company contributions and earnings. That meant that taxes were not usually due until after a retiree had received several months of benefits payments from the GSU Retirement Plan.

Now, however, pension payments are considered part employee/part employer contributions and the return of the employee's non-taxable contributions will be spread over the retiree's expected lifetime. Those who live longer than their life expectancy will have to pay taxes on all benefits received after their employee contributions have been recovered. If the retiree dies before all employee contributions are recovered, the unrecovered amount will be permitted as a tax deduction on the retiree's income tax return filed by the beneficiary or the estate.

## ESOP/PAYSOP

PAYSOP tax credits were eliminated after Dec. 31, 1986, by the new law. Although federal legislation eliminated ESOP tax credits in 1984, unused tax credits from previous years can still be carried forward to future years. The carry-forward provision continues with the new tax law.

ESOP distributions will be subject to a 10 percent excise tax after Jan. 1, 1990.

## Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)

IRA deductible contributions up to \$2,000 are still permitted for single employees covered under the GSU Retirement Plan who have an adjusted gross income of \$25,000 or less. Married employees may also participate, if they file jointly and have an adjusted gross income of \$40,000 or less.

The IRA deduction is phased out for adjusted gross income levels above these amounts and completely eliminated for single employees earning more than \$35,000 and for married employees filing jointly whose adjusted gross income is more than \$50,000.

For a person eligible for an IRA deduction, an additional \$250 spousal IRA contribution may be allowed for an employee whose spouse has no income.

Individuals who are not permitted to make a full or partial deductible IRA contribution will be allowed to make a full or partial nondeductible contribution. Earnings on these nondeductible IRAs are not subject to tax until actually withdrawn.

Because participation in GSU benefit plans directly affects IRA eligibility, the Internal Revenue Service may require some form of reporting of employee plan participation status.

## Individual Tax Rates

Individual tax rates will be reduced to five income tax brackets in 1987, ranging from 11 percent to 38.5 percent, and to two income brackets in 1988 of 15 percent and 28 percent.

Employees must generally (with certain exceptions) deposit or have withheld at least 90 percent of taxes owed on individual income tax returns, or suffer a 10 percent penalty.

Later this year, all employees will be asked to file new W-4 forms. The IRS requires the new forms no later than Oct. 1, 1987.

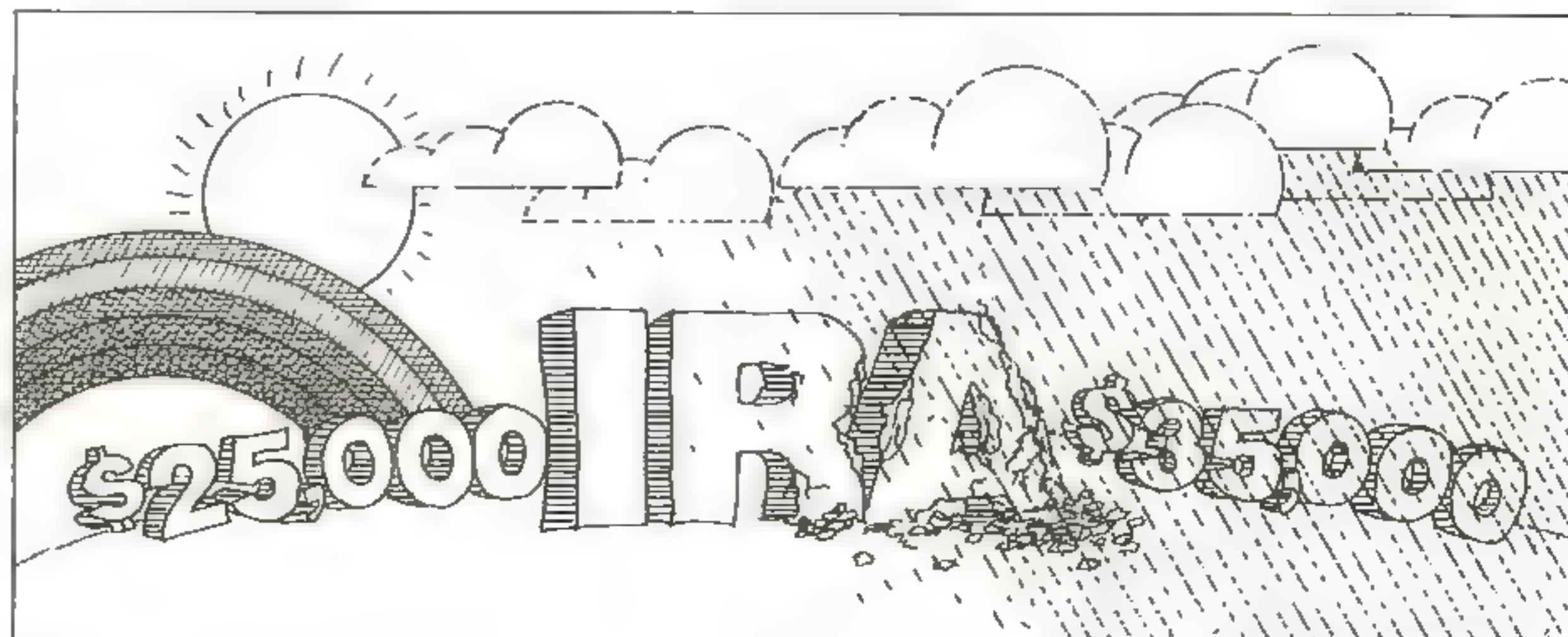
## Financial Aid to Education

Reimbursements distributed through Gulf States' Financial Aid to Education Plan will be treated as nontaxable compensation under the Tax Reform Act.

Although this is unchanged, there had been some efforts to consider such contributions as taxable income.



GSU will continue to reimburse 75 percent of the cost of required tuition, fees and books for approved job-related classes upon satisfactory completion.





## New arrivals



**Name:** Ashley Rene Phillips  
**Born:** May 15, 1986  
**Parents:** Benny R. (equipment operator, Sabine Station) and Deborah Phillips



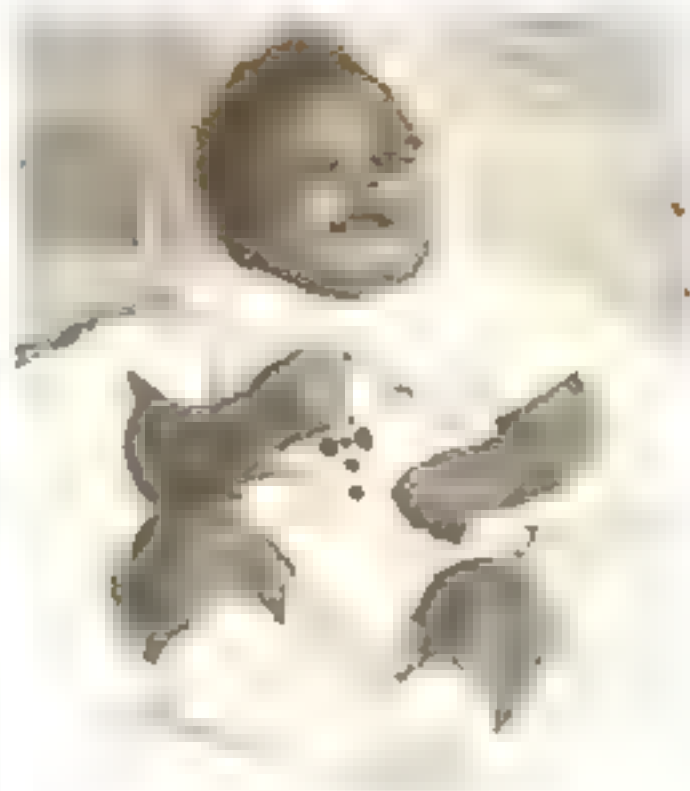
**Name:** Kalie Elizabeth Leonard  
**Born:** May 24, 1986  
**Parents:** Joe (meter reader, Beaumont) and Deborah (clerk, Beaumont) Leonard



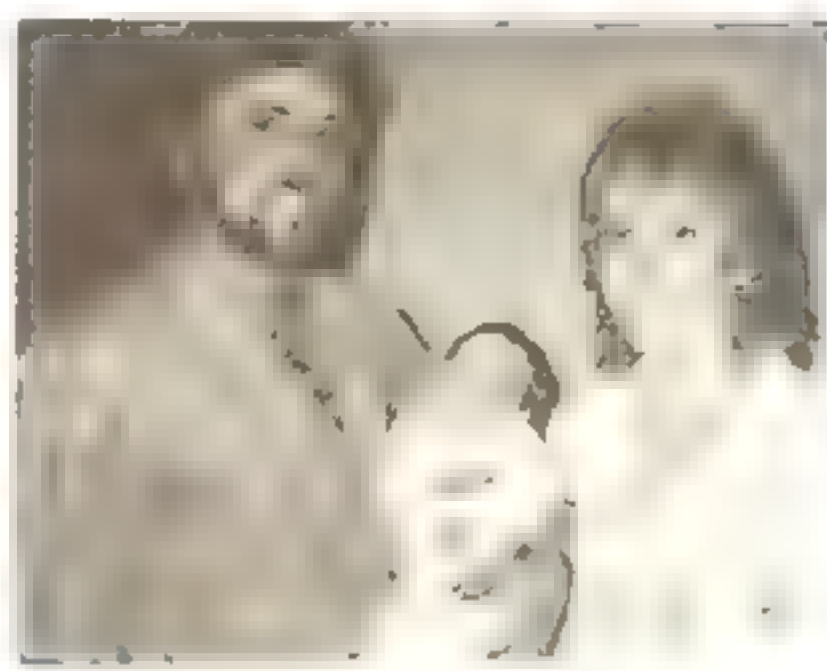
**Name:** Elise Irene Moran  
**Born:** June 13, 1986  
**Parents:** Dean and Lena (customer contact clerk, Baton Rouge) Moran



**Name:** Michelle Louise Hrnair  
**Born:** July 8, 1986  
**Grandparents:** Homer (assistant line supervisor, Silsbee) and Johni Shawver



**Name:** Edward G. Delone Jr.  
**Born:** July 27, 1986  
**Parents:** Edward and Myra C. (clerk, Baton Rouge) Delone



**Name:** Kira Elizabeth Daniels  
**Born:** Sept. 16, 1986  
**Parents:** Ricky (lineman-1st class, Port Arthur) and Regina (customer contact clerk, Port Arthur) Daniels

## Thompson grows giant cantaloupe

Kermit Thompson just may have a green thumb, reports *Plain Talks'* correspondent Edith Patterson.

The Lake Charles employee, who has worked for GSU since 1979, reportedly grew an oversized cantaloupe this summer. The muskmelon was about as big as two large-sized cantaloupes in one.



*Thompson displays his oversized cantaloupe.*

## Employees stock soup kitchen

Port Arthur Division employees helped stock the Golden Triangle Soup Kitchen of Port Arthur by collecting \$200 used to buy beans, soup, vegetables, sugar, rice, corn and peaches, reports *Plain Talks'* correspondent Sue Simon.

The soup kitchen is a non-profit organization that helps feed homeless people.



*Roosevelt Sims (far left), a volunteer worker for the soup kitchen, collected can goods purchased by Port Arthur employees. Helping load the items were (from left) Barry Murchison, Debbie Peron and Glenda Pruett.*

## Champs named in tournament

The winning volleyball team for the 1986 Financial Services Picnic was a sextet made up of three employees and three other employees' spouses.

According to Matt Raven, the winners represented General Accounting and Regulatory Reporting. They were Danny Caywood, husband of Janna Caywood, staff accountant I; Brian Dokken, staff accountant II; Sheila Johnson, supervisor-general accounting; Mary Jane Fournier Parsley, computer control operator, and her husband, George Parsley; and Phillip Young, husband of Jackie Young, stenographer-senior.

Raven noted that the 1986 winners received T-shirts emblazoned with the words, "1985 Volleyball Champs." The T-shirts were left over from the 1985 picnic, which was rained out.



*Donald Narcisse*

## Player called "Mr. Dependable"

Donald Narcisse has been dubbed "Mr. Dependable" by the Texas Southern University football team in Houston.

Narcisse, son of Paul Narcisse, utility worker II in Port Arthur, was called "the best blocker on the team" by Tiger Coach Lionel Taylor.

In 1986, Narcisse led the country in receptions with 61 and led Division 1AA with 13 touchdowns. He attributed his success to two factors. "I think that experience is the biggest factor. I have learned to read defenses and run precise patterns. Also, with a receiver like Darrell Colbert playing opposite of me, a lot of balls will be thrown to me."



*Rufus Mier (right) goes off to jail with a Jaycee "policeman."*

## Jail term raises money

Rufus Mier, marketing superintendent in Port Arthur, was "arrested" by local Jaycees as part of a fund-raising effort for the American Cancer Society.

After he was "jailed" at Central Mall, bail was set and co-workers contributed enough money to get him out of the pokey, reports *Plain Talks'* correspondent Sue Simon.



## Brooks leads Lake Charles club

Tommy Brooks of Jennings was elected president of the Lake Charles Division Sideliners Club for 1986-87, reports Walter House.

Other division officers are Rene DeBlanc of Lake Charles, vice president and reporter, and Wilda Hine of Jennings, secretary-treasurer.

District-level representatives are Melvin Garman and Lula Reed, representing Jennings District, and J.K. Powell, H.T. Buckalew and Paul Dugas, all of whom represent the Lafayette District.

Brooks and Powell also serve on the Social Committee, along with Sammie Bono of Lake Charles.

Four members serve on the system-wide Sideliners Committee. They are House, Brooks, Hine and Phil Allen.



*Dorothy and Lawrence Jordan*

## Jordan ends 24-year career

Former district superintendents J.W. Lamb and R.P. "Dick" Smith were among those honoring Lawrence Jordan of Denham Springs upon his Oct. 1 retirement from the company.

Jordan, whose 24-year GSU career began on July 30, 1962, was a T&D truckdriver, reports *Plain Talks'* correspondent Mamie Burrell.

Jimmy Hurst, utility foreman-

line, was master of ceremonies during the farewell party. A surprise visitor was Denham Springs Mayor Herbert Hoover, who reportedly had plenty of good things to say about Jordan. Presentations made to Jordan included a plaque, given by Ernest C. Kelly, assistant line supervisor, and a paper sack filled with money, given by Billy Henderson, line foreman.



*D.O. Gipson*

## Gipson's career spans 37 years

D.O. Gipson retired from Lewis Creek Station on May 1, reports *Plain Talks'* correspondent D.W. Rutherford.

Gipson, the plant's general maintenance supervisor, had been with GSU for 37 years.



*From left, those attending the reception for Foss (center) were Donald Hood, supervisor-consumer services, and Randy LeJeune, consumer service representative-senior.*

## Foss closes 35-year career

A reception was held Aug. 29 honoring Charles Foss, who ended his 35-year GSU career by retiring three days later.

Foss, a section head for division accounting in Baton Rouge,

began working for Gulf States on July 17, 1986.

## Deaths given

—**Malvin Owen Akins**, 80, of Clinton died Nov. 30 in his home. A native of Tyler, Texas, he retired from GSU as a supervisor. Survivors include one son, Tommy Akins of Greenwell Springs; one brother, Joe Akins of Lake Charles; and two grandchildren.

—**Monte Carl Street**, 81, of Jasper died in his home on Nov. 27. A native of Loring, La., he spent 47 years in the electric utility industry, including 22 years with Gulf States.

Survivors include his wife, Myrtle Rae Holland Street; one son, Dr. Jerry N. Street of Houston; and one daughter, Jill B. Street of Beaumont. Miss Street is Edison Museum curator in Beaumont.

—**Robert M. Stone**, 79, of Navasota died Nov. 19. His last job with Gulf States was as a division substation operator in Conroe. He is survived by his wife, Imo L. Stone.

—**Lovett Young**, 82, of Baton Rouge died Nov. 19 in Baton Rouge General Medical Center. A native of Sour Lake, he retired from Gulf States as a chief chemical engineer at Louisiana Station. Survivors include his wife, Pauline Jones Young of Baton Rouge; two brothers, Mike Young of Houston and Joe Young of San Augustine; three sisters, Edna H. Cannon of Houston, Mrs. Otis Collins of Splendora and Mrs. Hugh Ferguson of Nome; and three grandchildren.

—**Billy N. Okervall**, 43, of Baton Rouge died Nov. 18. He retired from GSU as a test technician-1st class at Louisiana Station. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn N. Okervall.

—**Carlton L. Shannon**, 76, of Liberty, Texas, died Nov. 15. He retired from GSU as a senior engineering assistant in Dayton. Survivors include his wife, Margaret E. Shannon.



# They've got the points

by Mike Rodgers

One year ago this month, Gulf States took the wraps off a new incentive marketing program called "You've Got the Power" and introduced it to employees. The campaign offers "power credits" which can be redeemed for merchandise or turned in for cash. Employees who signed up in 1986 were eligible for credits if they successfully encouraged customers building a new home or business or replacing gas equipment to install electric heat pumps, heat pump water heaters or electric water heaters. "You've Got the Power" also included incentives for security and flood lights.

Photo by Mamie Burrell



*Reynelle Ewing*

Overall this program got a lot more people involved than past marketing programs. Over 480 employees earned power credits," notes Bobbie Ireland, commercial development analyst. She points out that the biggest success came with security and flood lights. "Through November 1986, employees sold 5,091 lights for an additional 4,655 annual megawatt hours."

*Plain Talks* spoke with four of the five top division non-marketing point-earners for 1986. The fifth, Gail Hinson of Port Arthur, was unavailable for an interview. All four employees stressed that people are very interested in security lights. "I just talked to people whenever I went out for a turn-on," says Bobby Guidry, utility



*James Morgan*

foreman in Lafayette. "When you explain to people about the low-cost and the protection security lights offer, they get interested quickly. Any chance I got, I talked about those lights." Guidry's efforts earned him 36,900 power credits.

Two customer contact clerks, Reynelle Ewing in Baton Rouge and Melinda Kruse in Cleveland, won their power credits by asking buyers of existing homes if they were interested in having inactive security lights turned on. "We have quite a few new customer turn-ons in places where lights had already been installed," says Ewing, who compiled 59,400 power credits. She added, "When I asked them if they wanted those lights removed, they would usually decide to keep them and have them activated." Observes Kruse, "This is a small office staffed by only two of us. People saw our signs about security lights and expressed interest. We also found many people who wanted inactive lights turned on. Those accounted for the majority of my earned credits." That customer interest enabled her to collect 65,700 power credits.

"I found it very easy to sell the lights," says James Morgan, serviceman-1st class in Anahuac, who earned 66,600 power credits. "Both friends and customers asked about them. A few people wanted to know why we switched from mercury vapor to sodium lights. When I outlined the advantages of the new lights, they were impressed." Morgan handled a few inquiries about heat pump water heaters, but like the others who tallied up the most points, he found that security lights were in the biggest demand.

Power credits will only be issued on security and flood light sales in 1987. Employees interested in participating in the program should contact Bobbie Ireland at 733-4936.

Photo by George Irvin



*Bobby Guidry*





Realism was key to the space mission for (from left) Amy East, Amy Oliver and Misty Hammack.

## Space adventure

by Susan Gilley

Amy Oliver, Amy East and Misty Hammack spent three days circling Earth in the space shuttle Challenger II. Their 35 orbits covered an estimated 927,500 miles.

Not only were they the first all-female team in space, but the New Caney trio surely represented the first all-11-year-old space travelers.

The trip was purely imaginary, but judging from the media coverage by Houston-area newspapers, radios and televisions, their "orbit" was significant. The youngsters, the first of six such "missions" at the school, actually spent two nights inside a plastic bubble in the lobby, connected to the outside world only through "mission control" — a video-camera setup in their classroom.

According to Connie Calfee, a GSU consumer information coordinator in Conroe, the project was the brainchild of sixth-grade science teacher Rick Collins, who wanted to acquaint his students at New Caney Intermediate School with space-age technology. Collins, who is also a member of the company's Western Division Energy Education Advisory Council, says he came up with his scheme after reading about a

high school group that planned to reenact schoolteacher Christy McAuliffe's venture into space in early 1986. The crash of the Challenger cancelled their plans.

Collins, who was among applicants for the teacher in space program, reveals that he approached the experiment with the attitude of "making it real, but keeping it on a level appropriate for this age group. We wanted them to stay isolated, to communicate through the videotape and camera setup and to get the feeling of space-age technology."

Although the entire project cost the school about \$200, it utilized existing school computer and electronic equipment valued at about \$8,000 and accepted donations from area businesses, including a hardware store. Gulf States provided hardhats for the landing crew, as well as having sent Collins to the University of Texas Energy Science Symposium.

Realism was so important to the project, that the youngsters underwent preflight physicals by the school nurse. As a result, Laura Andrews, who was originally slated to serve as engineering officer, was not permitted to fly because she had a 101-degree fever. She relinquished her seat

to backup officer Hammack. Amy Oliver was captain and Amy East was the science officer for the Challenger II, which was the name selected by their classmates for the project.

As "splashdown" neared at 2 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, schoolchildren, teachers, school officials and other wellwishers gathered around the bubble, carrying tiny American flags. The landing crew sported GSU hardhats. Cheers went up as the first of the space adventurers reached through the Velcro-sealed opening.

The youngsters remained composed as they were presented roses and the school principal shook their hands, but they did tell inquisitive reporters that the bathroom was the most-missed luxury during their "trip."

Collins, who plans to write up the project for other educators to use, notes, "I'm sure other people can improve on our idea. We were creating it daily."

Ironically, Collins reveals that he later learned that his application for the teacher in space program was somehow lost in the mail. But if it is ever again offered, he insists, "I would not hesitate to sign up."



# PLAIN TALKS

P. O. Box 2951  
Beaumont, Texas 77704

Address Correction Requested

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**  
Beaumont, Texas  
Permit No. 11

Care to  
lend a  
hand?

Join

**Project CARE**

A program to help the  
needy elderly with utility  
bills. Ask your local GSU  
office for details.

**GULF STATES  
UTILITIES CO.**

Energy is everybody's business.



Employees can continue  
to help  
by renewing their pledges